

Claims:

1. A distributed communication system comprising:
a user terminal for generating and processing user data in a
connectionless format:
5 a relay node communicatively connected to the user terminal, the relay
node supporting a connection-oriented operation functionality; and
a gateway communicatively connected to the relay node for managing
the interface between the user terminal and the relay node.
2. The system of claim 1, wherein the user data includes data in an IP
format.
3. The system of claim 1, wherein the relay node comprises an ATM
switch
4. The system of claim 3, wherein the relay node is disposed in a
geosynchronous satellite.
5. The system of claim 1, wherein the gateway comprises a route server.
6. The system of claim 1, wherein the gateway comprises a next hop
server.
7. The system of claim 1, wherein the gateway comprises a router.
8. The system of claim 1, further comprising a router connected to the
user terminal.
9. The system of claim 8, wherein the gateway comprises a route server
which is operatively connected to the router.

10. The system of claim 8, wherein the router is connected to a network.